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## Phenomenology Study: Accountability of a Political Party in the Context of Local Election

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to understand the forms and practices of accountability of a political party under the perspective of Regional Executive Board (DPD) in Jombang City. Data is collected through interviews with informants. By using phenomenology of interpretive paradigm as a research design, the results of the study indicate that the accountability of the political party in the practices of the local election of Jombang City is categorized into three forms, which are accountability of the quality of politician candidates, legal accountability, and accountability of campaign funds.

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### 1. Introduction

This paper is a study of understanding the forms and its practices of accountability of a political party in the context of the organization of local elections. The importance of the issue of accountability expressed by Rosenbaum (2003), i.e:

“There is no issue more central to good governance than accountability generally and the accountability of those in government to their citizenry in particular. Consequently, there is no issue more central to any discussion of the challenges facing government and civil servants, either now or in the 21st Century, than matter of commitment to a

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high degree of accountability. Indeed, issues of accountability to the citizenry are quite simply the most important elements of contemporary governance and, as a consequence, need to be at the very center of any discussion about good governance, education for the public service and the future millennium”.

In the view of Stewart (1984), the exercise of governmental powers is legitimated by the requirements of public accountability. Raba (2006: vii) argues that accountability is a condition of the creation of good governance, democratic, and mandate (good governance). Accountability is one of the most important concept in politics and economics today (Velayutham & Perera, 2004). Thus, accountability becomes an important indicator of a government to public confidence.

As an organization where its existence depends on public (constituents), then the management of political parties promoting the values of accountability is a necessity. The accountability of political party is based solely on the delivery of financial information as a form of accountability (electoral participants). The submission of the financial report receipt and use of campaign funds to the General Election Commission (KPU) have been audited by a public accountant (General Election Commission Regulation No. 06 Tahun 2010, Bastian, 2007: 156).

There are various studies carried out regarding accountability. The studies are in the context of business organizations (Swift, 2001; Vamosi, 2005; Velayutham & Perera, 2004; Messner, 2009), governmental organizations (Patton, 1992; Sinclair, 1995; Gray et al. 1997; Widodo, 2001; Raba, 2006), NGO organizations (Ebrahim, 2003; Gray et al., 2006; O'Dwyer & Unerman, 2008), political organizations (Dubnick, 2002; Crowell, 2003; Keohane, 2003; Radikun, et al., 2008; Kholmi, 2010; 2013), and higher educations (Coy & Pratt, 1998; Doost, 1998). Most of the studies are in positivism where the studies produce positive science that much emphasis on practical aspects and ignore the aspect of values. The positivism approach is argued obscuring its meaning of the social reality behind the creation of science (Triuwono, 2000).

Studies on accountability with phenomenological approach has been done, such as Fikri, et al. (2010) examines the accountability practices of NGO organizations. The results showed that the accountability of program and financial accountability is not something that is important to the community. People are more concerned with the actions of how organizations manage and empower them. Widati, et al. (2011) examines the meaning and accountability of assets in religious feminist organization. Economic enterprises require accounting as a tool of accountability. Based on the above reasoning, this study attempts to develop the idea of accountability in the organization of political parties in the context of local elections using a phenomenological approach to understanding the phenomenon (Burrell & Morgan 1979: 243).

## 2. Previous Research

Accountability is inseparable from the existence of the three theories, i.e., the agency theory, stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory. This study refers to the agency theory is based on the thought Jensen & Meckling (1976). Accountability emerged as a logical consequence of the relationship between agent and principal. The relationship by many experts called the agency relationship. Jensen & Meckling (1976: 308) mention the agency relationship with the following definition:

An agency relationship is a contract under which one or more persons (the principal(s)) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf which involves delegating some decision making authority to the agent.

The definition has the sense that the agency relationship is a contract in the form of a delegation of authority in decision-making has been given by the principal to the company (agent). Power (1991) uses the concept of a principal-agent in building a framework for accountability to the community environment in which the company (principal) in his appreciation of the environment. Gray et al. (1997) defines accountability as the provision of information between the two parties. The first party is the one that is responsible and provide an explanation or justification for the other party. Schacter (2000) describes accountability as an activity to provide explanations and reasons for the actions done in the uses of power and taken corrective action when an error occurs.

In the context of the organization of political parties, party officials act as the person who has a mandate by their constituents (voters). In relation to it, Moe (1984) argues that political organizations in government relations can be seen as a relationship between principal and agent, namely from the people to the legislature, to the top level executives, mid-level executives, and reached the lowest level executives, which gives services directly to the public.

Accountability from the view of stakeholder theory, Gray, et al. (1997) describe asymmetric power between organizations and stakeholders will emerge disputing on the social contract, then the agent has the responsibility to provide information related to these activities. According to Cohen (1995), the issue of accountability is when will the stakeholders have enough information, accurate, understandable, and has a time span as the basis for them to take action. Stakeholder theory in this study sought to seek an understanding with regard to political party. Stakeholders should be given responsibility for its actions in the context of elections. In view of the theory of legitimacy, Patton (1992) explains that true accountability is closely related to the legitimacy of the validity of the existence of the organization. Gray et al. (1996) view accountability as legitimate businesses, enhancing organizational transparency, and democracy in society (society). This study does not intend to discuss the legitimacy to do with accountability from various viewpoints. But the theory of legitimacy is used as a frame of reference for stating that accountability and legitimacy to contribute to the process of forming a political party as an actor in the elections.

### **3. Methodology**

This study is a qualitative research that aims to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by research subjects (Moleong, 2008: 6). This study sought to understand the meaning according to the situation as it is. The paradigm suitable for this study is an interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is believed to provide a deeper understanding of the "accountability" from the viewpoint of the informant. As noted by Chua (1986) action can only be understood by reference to its meaning, where the interpretive paradigm facilitates it.

Phenomenology is one school of thought in the interpretive paradigm. Phenomenological methodology is used to consider the significance of understanding the daily life of a human being (life world) to reveal social problems and to interpret how people act in everyday life (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 243). Based on this concept, the study observes phenomena in the field using the phenomenological method to look at the accountability practices of political parties. This study uses the view of the Regional Executive Board (DPD) in looking at its public reality. DPD – Jombang City is chosen as a subject (person) who know and are involved directly in the activities of the organization in a political party in Jombang, East Java - Indonesia.

#### *3.1. Data collection*

Data were collected by in-depth interview and by participant observation. Instruments in this study are the researchers themselves. This is in line with Moleong (2008: 17) who states that: researchers are trying to get into the conceptual world of the subjects he studied such a way that they understand what and how an understanding developed by those around events in everyday life. Selected politicians are interviewed to participate in the study. The interviewees are the head of the Political Parties (AF), vice-chairman I (MS), vice-chairman II (BC), secretary (FR), treasurer (SC), and the Advisory Council of the Party (MJ).

#### *3.2. Data Analysis*

Analysis of data using Husserl's way of thinking about crystallization (term Husserl called reduction) to experience of the phenomenon is carried out as the essential element of the study. According to Husserl (1977) cited by Maulidin (2003: 19), the process of data analysis has three stages: (1) bracketing (*epoché*), which reveals the reality (phenomenon) without preconceptions; (2) crystallization eidetic: sorting out the essential aspects to be formulated into meaning, and are grouped into certain themes; (3) the stage of synthesized themes into the narrative description.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

Based on interviews and observations in a political, the results of the study indicate that the accountability of the political party in the practice of local election is categorized into three forms, i.e., accountability of the quality of politician candidates, legal accountability, and accountability of campaign funds.

#### 4.1. Quality accountability candidate: "An expectation"

According to informants, the quality of a leader of the region as follows:

Interview with MJ

"... selecting of leaders (executive/legislative) begins with one condition, namely character and moral leaders candidates. From it, accountability will be emerged."

In addition FR,

"Who would be nominated become public leaders through a rigid mechanism. That is the democracy. Regional leaders should have three things, namely morality, capability and acceptability."

Morality is an indicator of the quality of candidates that is measured by the politician candidate behavior. A leader should be someone who is 'clean', that is to say a leader who is not a moral defect. It is important that the leader is a role model to the public. Acceptability is important to any candidate to be accepted or be approved hierarchically by the board of political party. There is a mechanism in nominating a Mayor of the Regency Candidate (*Calon Bupati*) or Deputy Mayor of the Regency Candidate (*Calon Wakil Bupati*). In this respect, SM declares:

"... there is a coordination at the local, regional, and national level. Regions argue to convey various information about the candidates that supported by the Regional Executive Board [DPW]. DPW is an arm of the Central Executive Board [DPP]."

Capability is the quality of the candidate that is measured by his/her capacity and existence in society. FR says:

"How can a society accept the existence of a leader, if he/she does not have a capacity to be a leader or politician, but he/she just uses money [money politics] to get a political position."

As stated by Gamawan Fauzi (The Minister of Home Affairs), there are three things that should be considered in the elections, i.e., quality, integrity, and credibility of candidates (quoted JawaPos, 26 April 2010). However, the selection is more directed to the parties which candidate has the most "Ammunition" one party to pay the entrance (Dirmansyah, 2010). The statement implies that the candidates who do not have accountability and integrity on quality, use money politics as a powerful weapon to win.

Furthermore MJ states about the selection and quality of Mayor of the Regency Candidates or Deputy Mayor of the Regency Candidates through the mechanism of the nomination:

"Before the proposal is accepted as a candidate for head of the region, there must be a commitment without money politics, so it is not only looking for power. The candidate must be coordinated with the constituents, it is a form of accountability. He [party leaders] mentions the core of a hadith, "do not look for office, if chosen. Being a party official responsible for the candidate or candidates for deputy regent regent, because it brings the name of the party and the nation's future."

Additionally, AF has an expression when the first meeting of August 8, 2010 meeting of the DPD and DPC (Branch of Parties) in Jombang, for as follows: "Ideally, a leader is a person who is very decisive for the benefit of the people or nation."

"Ideal" is interpreted "an expectation" given to a nation's leader. Personal importance (in terms of quality) in the formation of the party cadres in exchange candidacy raised political positions (executive or legislative). Accountability is an important quality of a candidate in the elections as the establishment of good governance. This is what is meant "a hope".

#### 4.2. Legal Accountability

Then what happens if a political party breaks laws related to the election? MS gives an opinion:

“Accountability means that activity or implementation of a program should be matched with the report and can be justified by the party’s rules.”

Additionally, SC argues,

“... to obey the rules, made financial reporting on the implementation of the General Election. Parties need to be accountable, so as not to cause discord as well as law as a reformist party.”

MS explains,

“Banners must obtain a permit and place of installation is not just any place, especially the installation of banners in the city. *Alhamdulillah*, so far we have never violated party included in the donation.”

The above statement indicates that the form of legal accountability in the form of rebuke to the members if there is a mistake that is not in accordance with the rules, so there is a lot of business with another party or another party.

#### 4.3. Accountability of Campaign Fund: "Only slapstick (*Dagelan*) and formalistic"

In public sector organizations, the financial report is an essential component to create accountability (Mardiasmo, 2009: 159). Commission Regulation No. 06 Year 2010 on Guidelines for Reporting of Election Campaign Fund Participants in the General Election of Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head (Election) states a clear to prepare a financial report. How to practice accountability party campaign funds? Based on interviews with AF and observations on the sidelines while meeting and coordination DPD are as follows;

“Accountability is a campaign fund accountability report on the revenue and expenditure of campaign funds. Campaign finance reports as well as reports formalistic understood, that the financial statements are made only as a formality to meet the obligations of a financial report to the General Election Commission [KPU]. The financial statements have not revealed the "spirit" of the actual accounting.”

FR states that:

“... submitting financial statements to the Commission is "just a joke only". In calculations for t-shirts, printing costs, and the cost of the campaign, of course, requires billions, it was reported that the number of actual, must be sanctioned for violating the provisions of the Act are limits campaign contributions. This led to the funding of a non-report, then there is deception in preparing the financial statements. That can be engineered critical accounting transaction, there is evidence, clear account of receipts and expenditures, although it was a lie.”

The above statement can be interpreted that in substance the financial statements made by political parties in general have not been prepared correctly (honest) on transactions that actually happened. The reports are made for political purposes and legitimacy for the administration alone. Lack of accountability of political parties elections can stimulate the potential for corruption of some things (Badoh, 2010), namely: (1) the potential for manipulation of campaign funds; (2) money politics when deciding on the candidate and the candidate during the campaign; and (3) use of public funds for campaigning.

Accountability is never ending and never stopping, whether the candidate loses or wins in the election. Some phenomena may occur where only the winning candidate will prepare an accountability (i.e., preparing financial reports). But, it is not.

“... to carry out accountability of campaign finance does not see the issue of winning or losing, even lost still have to make a report. This shows the administration of a party.”

This means that fund reports or financial reports are part of accountability. Every candidate must submit it to the public transparency.

## 5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that in the accountability of an election, there are two categories of meaning that can be summarised to it. The first meaning is that the form of application accountability provides an important role in the context of elections. This means that the quality of selection of candidates, campaign finance reports and accountability of the observance of rules are important aspects to be publicly known. The second meaning is that accountability can make someone doing a manipulation and violation of the rules. So far the use of campaign fund reports is formalistic. In fact, the implementation of the campaign during the election is indicated by money politics.

The implication of the results is to contribute to the idea that the organization of political parties has to do accountability in the context of both financial and non financial. It is necessary because of the political party "people's mandate" and accountability can prevent political actors to perform money politics and corruption. In addition, the results provide an input to the Election Commission where the quality of politician candidates has to abide to be good governance.

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